

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH'S *PIANO SONATA OP.12*

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The aspiration of this dissertation is to bring forth the significance of Shostakovich's *Piano Sonata Op.12*. This sonata is a hybrid of the German musical tradition, Russian Modernism, and Liszt's thematic transformation technique. It demonstrates Shostakovich's highly intellectual compositional skills influenced by the education that he received at St. Petersburg Conservatory as well as the exposure to modern music in the 1920s.

This dissertation discusses composition techniques, such as the harmonic piers adapted from Alexander Scriabin, neighboring-tone technique, which involves the application of semitone cell throughout the piece, as well as the technique of thematic transformation borrowed from Liszt. These all come together by Shostakovich's design in the most controversial sonata form. The *Piano Sonata Op.12* also sheds light on Shostakovich's early compositional style and proves its contribution to the evolution of sonata genre in the twentieth-century.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The *Piano Sonata Op.12*, composed in 1926 after Dmitri Shostakovich received success from his First Symphony, was first conceived as a concerto but was eventually written in the sonata genre. The Russian critic Matias Grinberg commented: “The transition, better, a breakthrough, from a symphony to a sonata coincides with his completion from the Conservatory. This was an important step for Shostakovich on his artistic journey. . . . The sonata – by its uncompromising, naked, passionate outpouring of wild power – is received as an explosion, a revolt, a liberation and break with the past.”¹

Shostakovich premiered this sonata on 25 November 1926 at the Leningrad Association of Contemporary Music.² He also performed the piece subsequently on many occasions, including in the Mozart Hall in Moscow.³ During these performances, the sonata raised so much curiosity from the audience that they requested Shostakovich to perform the piece a second time. The sonata was well received by the public and this success set Shostakovich onto the path of being an independent composer.

So many novel combinations of compositional techniques and musical elements are employed in this sonata that one questions the rational logic behind the piece. However, it is precisely the intricate facet of the piece that makes this sonata appealing to explore. One of the first persons to read the score was Shostakovich’s teacher in composition, Maximilian Osseyevich Steinberg (1883-1946), who played the sonata for Shostakovich and was corrected for playing wrong notes. He responded, “You hear what you wrote, and that means that you

¹ Dmitri Shostakovich, *Sonata No.1 for Piano*, Foreword of Russian version by Manashir Iakubov, trans. Aleksandr Spiridonov (Moscow: DSCH Publishers, 1998), 4.

² Ibid., 3.

³ Ibid., 3.

composed this music and not invented it”⁴ V.Y. Shebalin, under the pen name Arion, wrote a review in the magazine *Contemporary Music* that remarked that the “brilliant and enthralling piano composition advantageously sets apart the sonata of the talented Leningrad composer from the many quasi-piano compositions which are, unfortunately, so frequent in the last years.”⁵ On the other hand, Shostakovich’s difficulty in moving from episode to episode is noticeable. As he said, “The idea of the sonata is growing. It demands shaping.”⁶ Evidence of his experimentation with sonata form and sonata genre is unquestionable. Shostakovich’s particular design, utilizing the semitone cell as the ultimate horizontal musical foundation upon which to create an absolute vertical structure, makes this sonata a unique artistic entity. In 1928, the *Piano Sonata Op.12* brought him widespread attention at the International Society of Contemporary Music.⁷

Shostakovich composed only two piano sonatas. Piano Sonatas Opp.12 and 61, written seventeen years apart, are both critical works representing the transition from his early to mature styles. The design of the one-movement sonata form, the musical language, and the compositional technique in Op.12 attest to its unconventional nature. Both the pervasive dissonance and the complex texture make the *Piano Sonata Op.12* hard to grasp at the first listening. However, it is like looking through a kaleidoscope: one constantly finds delight through exploring the piece in depth.

⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid., 3.

CHAPTER II

MUSICAL LIFE IN RUSSIA

Dmitri Shostakovich was born on Sep 25, 1906, into a musical family in St. Petersburg. He received his first piano lesson from his mother. In 1919, his talent was recognized by Alexander Konstantinovich Glazunov, who advised and encouraged his initial study in the subjects of composition and piano at St. Petersburg Conservatory.⁸ The education he received at the Conservatory played an important role in establishing his early compositional development. Shostakovich studied composition with Maximilian Steinberg. “Besides academic disciplines and practical composition, Steinberg attached great importance to general musical development. His classes always did a lot of four-hand playing, and then analyzed the form of the pieces played and the way they were arranged for the instruments. Steinberg explained everything to do with the harmony clearly and concisely, drawing his pupils’ attention to interesting passages and nurturing their harmonic taste.”⁹

The piano lessons Shostakovich took from Leonid Nikolayev were beneficial to his knowledge of Western European music. Often Nikolayev conducted piano lessons in public in order to broaden students’ knowledge of piano repertoire. He further helped his piano students to understand the music in depth by directing their attention to details of harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic structures. Outside of piano lessons, Shostakovich also consulted Nikolayev’s opinion of his own works. Nikolayev, less a composer himself than a pianist, could still offer young Shostakovich invaluable insight. “He was able to give Dimitri truly valuable advice, making penetrating and sensitive comments on what he heard.”¹⁰

⁸ Ivan Martynov, *Dmitri Shostakovich: the man and his work* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 2.

⁹ Dimitri and Ludmilla Sollertinsky, *Pages from the Life of Dmitri Shostakovich*, trans. Graham Hobbs and Charles Midgley (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc, 1980), 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

Besides the education received at the Conservatory, the musical activities that took place in St. Petersburg in the early twentieth century also helped to forge young Shostakovich's music career. St. Petersburg has a long history of absorbing culture from Western Europe. The musical life of St. Petersburg was developed by several important musicians and organizations. The musical trend had gone through pro-German, pro-European to Russian Nationalism in the late nineteenth century. At the turn of the twentieth century, Russian composers moved forward to embrace Modernism.

The origin of music education and activity in Russia traced back to the mid-eighteenth century. Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894), one of the great pianists, played an important role as an educator in developing music education in Russia. In 1859, Rubinstein founded the Russian Musical Society, an organization promoting and performing new music from Western Europe at St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theater.¹¹ In 1862, he founded the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Rubinstein, a well-traveled, well-rounded and an open-minded artist, absorbed western European musical culture well and committed to it whole-heartedly. In the first term of his directorship of the Conservatory, he advocated German and European musical traditions at the conservatory. In his second term, from 1887-1891, he incorporated both Russian Nationalism and German traditions into the curriculum.¹²

In 1885, the musical trend in Russia was taken in another direction by Mitrofan Belyayev's (1836-1904) founding of the Russian Public Symphony. Belyayev, a philanthropist, not only sponsored the performances of contemporary music, but also created the Glinka Prize for outstanding new repertoire by modernistic Russian composers. More than two hundreds

¹¹ Charles F. Barber, *Lost in the Stars: The Forgotten musical Life of Alexander Siloti* (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press Inc, 2002), 105.

¹² Ibid., 107.

works were recognized through this venue. The musical trend had proceeded from pro-German towards Nationalism.¹³

The proliferation of musical activities continued with the next great figure, Alexander Siloti (1863-1945). Siloti invited guest artists, conductors, talented young composers and performers from all over the world who strived to be part of this great venue. It was under his guidance that new music of both European and Russian composers gained popularity from 1903 to 1917. A recollection from Siloti's daughter gives us a substantial account of the scene.

"Father introduced modern (new) music to Russia. He had them all. Anytime they had talent, he was for them. Why? It was Liszt's influence—he supported Berlioz and the others. He said we must be with the music of our own age and not be backwards. Stravinsky even one day told me, 'You know I am so grateful to your father. If it wasn't for him, we young people wouldn't know modern music.'"¹⁴ Siloti's concert series certainly helped to forge the foundation of new music in Russian musical society.

The year 1910 was an important watershed for the arts in Russia, including painting and literature as well as music.¹⁵ For music, it was a crucial division from Nationalism to Modernism. With the deaths of many major nationalistic composers, such as Rimsky-Korsakov in 1908 and Balakirev in 1910, and the return of Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) from Western Europe in 1911, the musical trend stepped into an avant-garde realm. The heyday of Modernism lasted no more than two decades; however, it planted seeds Shostakovich in the early 1920s. By the end of the 1920s, Proletarian music was the most favored by the government.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., 107.

¹⁴ Ibid., 111.

¹⁵ Peter Deane Roberts, *Modernism in Russian Piano Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 2.

¹⁶ Ibid., 2.

CHAPTER III

MUSICAL INFLUENCES

There are three threads of musical influence in Shostakovich's *Piano Sonata Op.12*: (1) the metamorphosis of the sonata genre, (2) the Modernism that took precedence in the musical life of Russia in the early twentieth century, (3) and the thematic transformation technique employed by Liszt. The *Piano Sonata Op.12* reflects Shostakovich's novel skill in the combination of these three musical influences.

The Sonata Genre in the West

Since the emergence of the sonata, the genre has continued to evolve in practice and in form. In the early nineteenth century, two influential codifiers of the sonata form, Carl Czerny (*Preface of Op.600* in 1848) and Adolf Bernhard Marx (*Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition* in 1845), provided some guidelines for composers in the writing of sonata-form movements. Although having a standard practice provided many benefits to a composer, it also created a series of problems for post-modernist composers' music. "Their generalizations fit some groups of classical works rather well and others rather badly, but they were a powerful influence for whereas the actual practice of sonata writing in the Classical era was complex and varied, the formulaic scheme as outline in the treatises was easy and clear cut."¹⁷ As William S. Newman put it negatively about the transformation of the sonata genre, "After some three and one-half centuries, 'sonata' has come full circle back to its original use 'merely as the general term for any music to be played on instruments.' Whatever more constructive forces may have moved in its place, the 'sonata' in our definition has been undermined at its core by the dissolution of music's very building blocks and by the abandonment, destruction, or exhaustion,

¹⁷ Kenneth Hamilton, *Liszt: Sonata in B Minor* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9.

whether deliberate or unwitting, of nearly everything that previously had determined the sonata's styles and forms."¹⁸

On the other hand, the German musicologist Carl Dahlhaus (1928-1989) cautioned us that the generalizations made about the sonata form by Czerny and Marx are merely a departure point for many works of the sonata genre, instead of a set rules for them. "One may establish in analysis the rule that the movement is to be interpreted, within sensible limits, as a variant of the form characteristic of the genre, and not as exemplifying another schema unusual for the genre."¹⁹ This especially makes analysis possible in the works of nineteenth-century and twentieth-century music. By further recognizing the difference, James Hepokoski suggested the term *deformation* when analyzing post-sonata form of the twentieth-century, in particular Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7*: "Thus, more than simply suggesting that one not reduce such works to sonata form, Hepokoski means to stress that some of these deformations are trademarks of the works."²⁰ Shostakovich's *Piano Sonata Op.12*, although composed much earlier than his *Symphony No. 7*, manifests this characteristic of deformation.

The Sonata Genre in Russia

The history of the sonata genre in Russia started mainly with the leading composer of Russian national opera, Mikhail Ivanovitch Glinka (1804-57), in the first quarter of the nineteenth-century. Even though Glinka's operas contained substantial national elements, his sonata compositions were very much in accordance with classical sonata form.²¹ His

¹⁸ William S Newman, *The Sonata Since Beethoven* (New York: The Norton Library, 1972), 4.

¹⁹ Carl Dhlhaus, *Analysis and Value Judgment*, trans. Siegmund Levarie, Monographs in Musicology No.1 (New York: Pendragon Press, 1983), 82-83; quoted in David C. Odegaard, *Sonata form and deformation in Dimitri Shostakovich's seventh symphony* (M.M. diss., University of Central Florida, 2000), 13.

²⁰ David C. Odegaard, *Sonata form and deformation in Dimitri Shostakovich's seventh symphony* (M.M. diss., University of Central Florida, 2000), 14.

²¹ William S Newman, *The Sonata Since Beethoven* (New York: The Norton Library, 1972), 702.

contemporaries were either following the same tradition or showing little interest in this genre. It was not until the late nineteenth-century and the beginning of the twentieth-century that the sonata genre was favored and being cultivated seriously. Beethoven's thirty-two piano sonatas remained as the doctrine for Russian composers. Liszt's Piano Sonata in B minor represented a model of deviation of the genre in the Romantic era. Composers like Anton Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Glazunov, Liapunov, Medtner, Scriabin and Prokofiev were some of the most important contributors to the sonata genre at the turn of the century. Almost all the composers of this generation were educated under heavy German tradition as well as influenced by the metamorphosis of the sonata genre cultivated in the Romantic period. Thus, one finds that the style of their sonatas presents mixed traits of the late Classical as well as Romantic styles. Among them, the most important composer was Anton Rubinstein, who founded the St. Petersburg Conservatory, which provided a breeding ground for the development of sonata genre.²²

Rubinstein was "one of the pivotal Romantics in musical Russia, one of the greatest pianists of the later nineteenth century, and, more specifically here, one of the most notable Romantic performers of piano sonatas (especially Beethoven's) . . . a promoter of past music, an active conductor, and a prolific, wide-ranging, once successful composer."²³ Because of his propensity towards Romantic music and Beethoven's piano sonatas, he set up a Western atmosphere at St. Petersburg Conservatory during his time of leadership there. At the Conservatory, it was German music being taught and reinforced. An apparent example was the musical training Shostakovich received from his piano teacher, Leonid Nikolayev. According to Alexander Tentser's thesis, Shostakovich composed his Second Piano Sonata in memory of his

²² Ibid., 704.

²³ Ibid., 704.

teacher, Leonid Nikolayev, who had a tremendous influence on his pianistic and compositional development. “Anxious to pay homage to the memory of Nikolayev, Shostakovich developed plans for a substantial piano sonata of four movements that would include a five-voice fugue, somewhat reminiscent of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata, Op. 106 (“*Hammerklavier*”), a work he had learned under Nikolayev. This was to be the *Second Piano Sonata*.”²⁴ Despite the different nature of Shostakovich’s two piano sonatas, the traits of the German Classical tradition are evident in both pieces.

Due to the pervasive dissonance, the tonal scheme of *Piano Sonata Op.12* is more abstract than in the Classical tradition. It functions as a lighthouse, governing the organization of dissonance as well as maintaining the structure of the design. It follows the Classical tonal scheme with little modifications. Shostakovich also expands the pitch range, the frequency of the tempo change, and the textural change, which continues the evolution of the sonata genre into the twentieth century.

The formal aspect of Shostakovich’s *Piano Sonata Op.12* continues the metamorphosis of the sonata genre developed in the Romantic era. It is composed in one movement with five distinct episodes. The one-movement structure, rather than the conventional three or four movements, is characteristic of the sonata genre in the mid-Romantic period. Schubert’s *Wanderer Fantasy*, Schumann’s *Fantasy Op.17* and Liszt’s *Piano Sonata in B minor* are among the well-known examples. In overall size, the *Piano Sonata Op.12* is on a much smaller scale than the examples mentioned. The fascinating aspect of the form in this sonata is the expansion Shostakovich allows for all thematic material and each structural division. This results in sectional writing, which creates the illusion of a multi-movement sonata.

²⁴ Alexander Tentser, “The Second Piano Sonata by Dmitrii Shostakovich: A Style Analysis” (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 1996), 18.

Russian Modernism

In addition to the training in German composition he received at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, the second influence on Shostakovich's composition was the Modernism movement in the early twentieth century. Alexander Scriabin was the main figure to lead this movement in the musical life of Russia. "In 1911 Scriabin returned to Russia and exercised a considerable influence on the rising generation of young composers until at least the mid-twenties."²⁵ Although this modernistic exposure was kept outside of St. Petersburg Conservatory when Shostakovich was in school, it still came to be one of the main forces in his *Piano Sonata Op.12*.²⁶ The fact that Russian society regarded the modernist Nikolai Miaskovsky (1881-1950) as one of the most progressive composers in the 1920s showed the impact of Modernism on music at that time. In the early 1920's, two groups of conflicting ideas about music had arisen. The more simplistic and traditional Proletarian music coexisted alongside Modernism, but experimentation within Modernism was encouraged at this time.

Shostakovich employs several compositional techniques from the two most influential Russian modern composers, Scriabin and Prokofiev. In the aspect of harmony, the method Shostakovich adopts in *Piano Sonata Op.12* is inclined toward Scriabin's technique of harmonic piers. This is a pronounced method often used in Scriabin's modernist work. As described by Peter Deane Roberts, "The individual bass notes in Scriabin's music are firm harmonic piers; they and the notes immediately above give definition to the complex textures. Collectively the bass notes are not meant to form a significant line but to mark the harmonic structure of the

²⁵ Peter Deane Roberts, *Modernism in Russian Piano Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 3.

²⁶ Roy Blokker and Robert Dearling, *The Music of Dmitri Shostakovich: The Symphonies* (London: Associated University Presses Inc, 1979), 22.

phrase.”²⁷ However, Shostakovich manipulates harmonic piers in a more abstract manner than Scriabin does. Compared to Scriabin’s approach in which the harmonic piers define the tonal structure of the piece, Shostakovich applies this method simply to point out crucial notes at important structural points.

In melodic design, Shostakovich’s style of writing is certainly inclined toward Prokofiev’s polyphonic philosophy. “Where, if not in polyphony, can one find the road to innovation?”²⁸ Prokofiev’s polyphony focuses on the independence and the freedom of each individual voice, which result in tonal unification. The polyphony in Shostakovich’s piano sonata possesses the same characteristics, but without any palpable propensity to create any unifying tonal center.

Other musical elements from Russian Modernism applied in this sonata include the ostinato principle, the progression of intervals of fourths, as well as the neighboring-tone technique. Shostakovich utilizes the ostinato as a color decoration of the musical content. As for intervals of fourths and the neighboring tone technique, both of them smear the horizontal line as well as the vertical harmonic structure. In the horizontal line, the intervals of fourths move in sequence, while in the vertical harmonic structure, they add sonorous color to the melodic line. The neighboring tone technique has an even greater effect. The semitone cell, which is fundamental to the neighboring tone technique, is the essential musical element intertwining through the *Piano Sonata Op.12*. The semitone cell not only constitutes the basis of chromatics that predominate the linear progression, but also creates the initial dissonance of vertical sonority. Shostakovich manipulates and expands this vital component through polyphony and

²⁷ Peter Deane Roberts, *Modernism in Russian Piano Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 27.

²⁸ Peter Deane Roberts, *Modernism in Russian Piano Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 29.

transformation technique, which results in difficulty in constructing the sonata form in a traditional manner. However, the dissonance in *Piano Sonata Op.12* places the piece into the category of modernist music.

Shostakovich's *Piano Sonata Op.12* is certainly inclined toward Modernism and demonstrates a drastic contrast to his later works, which is delimited by the political agenda. Peter Deane Roberts commented, "The early works of Shostakovich (which appeared in the middle and late twenties), in spite of their sometimes discordant and apparently radical style, reveal their nineteenth-century roots more readily" ²⁹ It is a highly creative piece that built upon traditional roots while applying the avant-garde methods of modernist composition. Both structurally and pianistically, the piece is exceptionally complex. Shostakovich seemed to make a great effort to apply everything he had learned up to this point in his musical studies. The traditional German foundation learned at St. Petersburg Conservatory used in conjunction with the modernistic trends of the Russian music explains some of the depth and motivation behind this challenging piece. Shostakovich's *Piano Sonata Op.12* came out with a European coat on the outside and Russian guts on the inside.

Liszt's Thematic Transformation Technique

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) was not the first person to use the technique of thematic transformation. However, it is a crucial feature of his music. According to Liszt, the idea is to bind together and round off a whole piece at its close. ³⁰ Beside in achieving textural integrity, Liszt also manipulates the character of the theme. The most well-known example is in *Piano*

²⁹ Ibid., 7.

³⁰ La Mara, ed., *Letters of Franz Liszt*, p.330; letter of March 26th, 1857 to Edward Liszt, 26 March 1857, quoted in Kenneth Hamilton, *Liszt: Sonata in B Minor* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 51.

Sonata in B minor, where Liszt transforms the hammer-blow fragmented theme at the beginning of the sonata into an expressive lyrical second subject.

Shostakovich adopted both textural transformation and character alteration in *Piano Sonata Op.12*. Unlike Liszt's application of five thematic elements, Shostakovich uses three—motives **a**, **b** and **c**, all of which originate from the first thematic material. A good example of a textural variant appears at the incipit of the second thematic material. Motive **aa**, a combination of the outline of the descending passage, F to F-sharp, and the two-note figure in fourths, demonstrates a correlation to motive **b**. As for character alteration, Shostakovich arranges a considerable mood change of motive **a** in the first Development Episode.

As in Liszt's *Piano Sonata in B minor*, thematic transformation is also a crucial compositional technique utilized in Shostakovich's *Piano Sonata Op.12*. It is a technique showing Shostakovich's creativity of musical design.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Piano Sonata Op.12

A brief evaluation using the standard of the Classical sonata form reveals the intricacy of the *Piano Sonata Op.12*. Traditionally, the bipolar tonal relationship of thematic materials determines the sonata form either in binary or ternary structure. In the *Piano Sonata Op.12*, the dissonance does not allow for organization by tonal structure. Furthermore, the role of harmony becomes secondary and almost insignificant due to the linear polyphonic writing. There is not a clear sense of tonal center in any part of this sonata. Notes added to the melodic line simply contribute to the aural color, instead of having a harmonic function. Chords appear mostly in their inversions, creating a sense of instability and restlessness. Even when the triad is in root position, a tonal quality is usually not perceivable due to the prevailing dissonance. The dissonance predominates until the very last moment of the piece. Because of its prevalence, the dissonance loses its tensional quality and becomes a more neutral sonority. Thus, it not only lacks harmonic function, but also loses the impact commonly sought through using dissonance. Schoenberg explained the role of dissonance in a profound way in his *Structural Functions of Harmony*. “Dissonances . . . are merely more remote consonances in the series of overtones.”³¹ Because of the dissonance, the structure of this sonata derives solely on the permutation and combination of thematic materials.

Although the tonal scheme no longer plays the traditional role and loses its structural function, it is still identifiable through harmonic piers at the first and the last notes outlining each episode, as well as important structural points. The traditional tonal association and contrast between thematic materials no longer exist. Instead, the contrast is manifested by the distinct

³¹ Arnold Schoenberg, *Structural Functions of Harmony* (New York: Norton & Company Inc, 1954), 193.

musical character of the different thematic materials. This contrast is also the cause of the sectional nature of the sonata form in this piece.

Piano Sonata Op.12 is clearly laid out in five Episodes. The first and second Episodes constitute the Exposition. The first Episode contains the first thematic material with various transformations, while the second Episode introduces the second and third thematic materials. There are two Development sections, the third and fourth Episodes. Each of these sections contains a slow-fast contrasting subsection. The fifth Episode is the Recapitulation, which is also the climax of the piece. In these five Episodes, Shostakovich adapted the concept of harmonic piers at structural points to clarify and outline the tonal contour.

Both the first and second thematic materials start on F with the neighboring tone embellished. However, the tonal center is not F. By carefully observing the ending of the piece, one could establish a hypothesis of tonality on C. Indeed, when one examines the harmonic piers that Shostakovich adopted in this sonata through the conventional harmonic principle of sonata form, the tonal scheme appears to be almost conventional. The first tonal arrival on C major occurs in m.21. Due to the surrounding dissonant sonority, it is easy to overlook this first arrival of C tonality. This C major chord loses not only its harmonic function but also its aural effect. In compensating for this deficiency, Shostakovich took advantage of the recurring quality of sequence to reinforce the sonority of the C major chord. Even though the dissonance and motor-like figures wash away the confirmation of C major so quickly that it is almost imperceptible to the listener, one could not neglect Shostakovich's intention of this tonal settling on C.

At the end of the second Episode before proceeding to the Development section (i.e., the third Episode), the music ends on a minor V chord, a standard harmonic idiom in sonata form. The tonal progression in the two Development episodes is a process leading back to the

Recapitulation. The first Development, leaving the listeners with a sense of mystery, ends solemnly on a C. The bass in the second Development begins a seemingly random pattern of arpeggios consistently beginning with a D. Later this pattern alternates between a D and E-flat to begin each arpeggio. This pattern of beginning notes gradually reaches up to a step away by sometimes including D-flat and E, but stays within the principle of a semitone relationship.

The Recapitulation of the first theme on F is accompanied by the reinforcement of using octaves in the left hand. The octave reinforcement, moving in a random linear pattern of chromatics and constantly forming a vertical interval relationship of seconds or sevenths with the main melody in the right hand, carries only one mission: to amplify the recapitulation of the first thematic material. On the other hand, the second thematic material recapitulates in a less affirmative manner. Although the second theme recapitulates on C, Shostakovich places it in the left hand fighting against the continuation of the first thematic material in octaves. It is noteworthy that in the aural mist and fog created by the extensive dissonance, Shostakovich still strives to follow a tonal scheme using elements of a traditional approach.

At the end of the *Sonata*, in m.289, Shostakovich starts the final outburst with a semitone cell, a signature musical element of *Piano Sonata Op.12*. The passage then reaches unison on F-sharp in two octaves. This tritone created in relationship to the C tonality is the ultimate open tension existing between two notes, as opposed to the closed tension of the semitone. Shostakovich then uses the tension of the semitone cell in one final moment before the piece ends. All the discord culminates in a brief G to C resolution, which is barely perceptible in the midst of the overwhelming dissonance. The *Sonata* ends abruptly.

The First Episode: Exposition of the First Thematic Material

The *Sonata* starts with the vibrant first thematic material, which could be further divided into three motives—**a**, **b** and **c** (Ex. 1). Shostakovich establishes a strong impression of the first thematic material by starting the piece with the clashing sound of the semitone E and F. Its dazzling spirit is further reinforced by the ongoing chromatics in motive **c**, as well as the outlined D-flat augmented chord in motive **a**. Motive **b** consists of a semitone and a dotted-rhythm in the interval of a fourth; both become prominent musical figures that Shostakovich incorporates into the *Sonata* with the transformation technique. For example, in m.31 (Ex. 2) Shostakovich transforms this linear semitone in motive **b** into a vertical dissonant interval E and F. This subtle transforming gesture is only a preliminary indication of the extensive transformational technique Shostakovich employs frequently in this work.

Ex. 1: Mm.1-8

The image displays a musical score for the first 8 measures of a piece, identified as Ex. 1: Mm.1-8. The score is written for piano (p) and includes the instruction *ff legato*. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D-flat minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into three sections, each labeled with a motive:

- Motive a:** This section covers measures 1 through 4. It begins with a D-flat augmented chord (D-flat, F, A-flat) in the right hand, followed by a chromatic line in the left hand. The right hand continues with a series of eighth notes.
- Motive b:** This section covers measures 5 through 6. It features a semitone interval (E and F) in the right hand, followed by a dotted-rhythm in the interval of a fourth.
- Motive c:** This section covers measures 7 through 8. It consists of a chromatic line in the right hand, followed by a series of eighth notes.

The score is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with various musical notations including notes, rests, and fingerings.

Ex. 2: Mm.31- 32



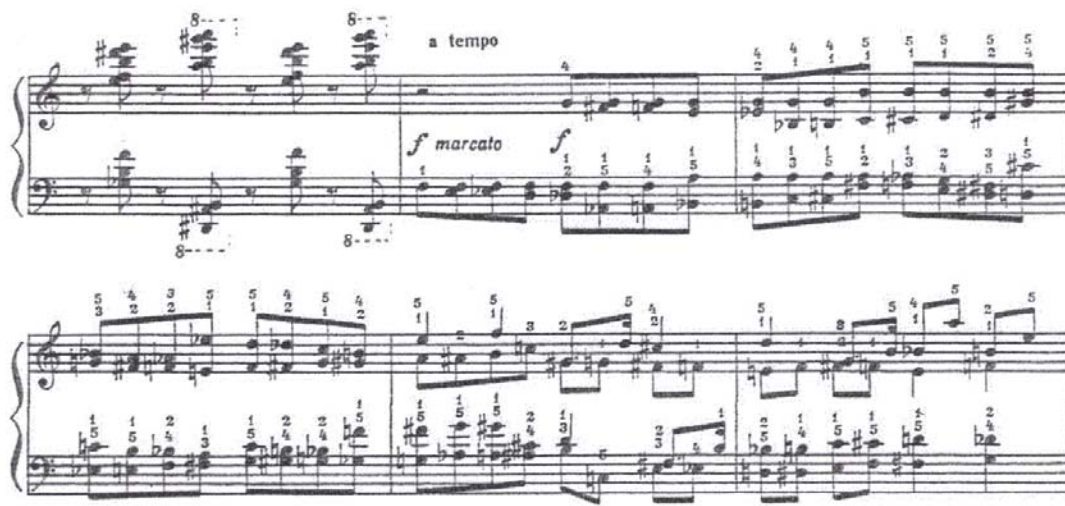
Polyphonic writing, the other important application of the semitone cell, produces multi-layered textures. Shostakovich creates multiple layers in either a compressed or an expanded form. In the expanded form, he creates three individual voices scattered in three staves. Each individual voice has its own aural identity. This idea is very similar to Prokofiev's polyphonic concept. As Peter Deane Roberts says, "Prokofiev's polyphony allows greater freedom to the individual voices, which are united by their allegiance to a common tonal center. . . ."³² In m.31, the musical texture is laid out in three-part polyphony, where the middle part, a transformation of motive **b**, serves as the main voice, and the two outer parts function as a drone with a Russian bell attribute. This polyphony, according to Peter Roberts in *Modernism in Russian Piano Music*, is characteristically Russian and traces back to the heterophony of Russian folk song.³³ The compressed polyphony Shostakovich employs is compact in structure. In m.38, Shostakovich places the first theme and a counter-melody in the left hand on F while juxtaposing the same combination in the right hand two beats later and played a ninth apart on G. Multi-layer texturing is an effective practice in manipulating the semitone cell.

³² Peter Deane Roberts, *Modernism in Russian Piano Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 29.

³³ Ibid.

The first thematic material is the main component of the first Episode. This episode is constructed of four distinctly different statements of the first thematic material with sequences and individual motives filled in. The first appearance of the first thematic material is in a polyphonic manner at the beginning of the piece. It is then dissected into small segments and the meter is changed to its duple counterpart in m.38 (Ex. 3). The deliberate rhythmic shift and the canonic style by an interval of a ninth apart (an inverted second) both contribute to the complexity of Shostakovich's compositional technique.

Ex. 3: Mm.37-41



The arrival of the third version of the first thematic material is set up by a series of sequences exchanging between registers (Ex. 4). This arrival, which is the last complete state of the first thematic material, subsequently leads to another triumphant climax in m.63. The build-up, where Shostakovich adds one more voice in the right-hand octave, initiates first in m.59 (Ex. 5). In order to create a more grandiose effect in m.61, Shostakovich combines the ongoing sequential motive **b** in the left hand with an added note to the chord that creates a bell-like sonority. This sets up a strong backbone for the peak in m.63 (Ex. 6).

The vertical layout of the motives in m.63 is another significant design Shostakovich develops further in this piece. The three-layered texture is the first important sign of verticality that Shostakovich displays in the *Piano Sonata Op.12*. This occurs in m.31 and is later applied to the entire slow section in the second Development episode. The result of this verticality is the juxtaposition of motives in various fashions. In m.63 motive **a** is intensified by the addition of extra notes that curiously form major triads throughout the motive. These triads do not possess any structural function, but merely lend pure sonorous effect to the climax. Below motive **a** is motive **b**, which vertically contributes towards the peak of the phrase when stacked within the three layers.

Following the climax, large-scale sequences encompass the entire concluding section of the first episode. These sequences include both vertical and horizontal progressions of dissonances, containing competing intervals of fourths and semitones, as well as their inversions. The application of fourths contributes mainly to the vertical dissonance, as opposed to semitones, which create a horizontal line. This vertical dissonance frequently occurs when Shostakovich tries to create a bulky sound.

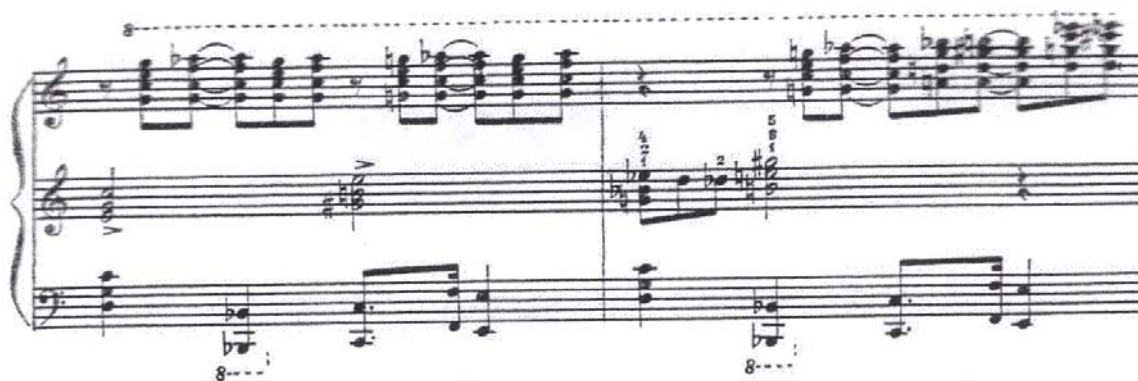
Ex. 4: Mm.46-57

Ex. 4: Mm.46-57. This musical excerpt consists of four systems of piano and bass staves. The first system (mm. 46-47) features a treble staff with a complex, rapid sixteenth-note passage and a bass staff with a more rhythmic accompaniment. The second system (mm. 48-49) continues the treble staff's melodic line while the bass staff provides harmonic support. The third system (mm. 50-51) shows a shift in texture with more sustained notes in the treble and active bass. The fourth system (mm. 52-53) concludes the excerpt with a final melodic flourish in the treble and a steady bass line. Dynamics include *ff* (fortissimo), *p* (piano), and *cresc.* (crescendo). Fingering is indicated by numbers 1-5 on the fingers.

Ex. 5: Mm.58-62

Ex. 5: Mm.58-62. This musical excerpt consists of two systems of piano and bass staves. The first system (mm. 58-59) features a treble staff with a series of chords and a bass staff with a more active line. The second system (mm. 60-61) continues the melodic and harmonic development. The tempo is marked *marcatissimo* (very marked). Dynamics include *cresc.* (crescendo) and *fff* (fortississimo). Fingering is indicated by numbers 1-5 on the fingers.

Ex. 6: Mm.63-64



The Second Episode: Exposition of the Second Thematic Material

The second thematic material (including motives **aa**, **bb** and **cc**) is delineated from the first theme more by a drastic change in character than tonal shift (Ex. 7). The character of the second Episode adapts immediately at the beginning of the passage through both the *Meno Mosso* tempo change and the addition of quarter rests in m.83. The two-beat rest at the introduction of the Episode attracts our immediate attention to the different nature of the second theme from the motor-like first thematic material. This short pause allows the audience an opportunity to breathe and to digest the musical content. Entering assertively on diatonic notes, motive **aa** immediately distinguishes itself in sonority from the previous Episode. In mm.87-88, the combination of motive **aa** and the two-note figures in the interval of fourths indicate a strong correlation to motive **b** in the first thematic material. This refined transformation is more noticeable in m.168 (Ex. 8). Both motive **bb** and motive **cc** feature large leaps in the linear progression. Combined with motive **aa**, this projects a grotesque and cynical character that typifies the second theme.

At m.113, the third theme, including motives **aaa** and **bbb**, continues the sarcastic quality of the second theme without its darkness (Ex. 9). This sonorous impression of light simplicity is achieved by the carefully arranged melodic line in the right hand juxtaposed to fourths

underneath. As a result, it creates an open quality to the chordal structure. The motive **bbb** accompanies motive **aaa** in a dainty manner, particularly through its staccato articulation. This countermelody, featuring the semitone cell, is essentially a transformation of motive **c** from the first thematic material. In this case, Shostakovich especially made use of second and seventh intervals to provide transition and variety within the motive. These two intervals are alternated repeatedly either as a continuous melodic line or a point of departure. Before proceeding to the Development, motive **bb** (part of the second thematic material) with its modified articulation comes in to mingle with motive **aaa** (part of the third thematic material) in m.125. These two motives create a polyphonic setting while remaining autonomous.

Ex. 7: Mm.87-98

The image displays a musical score for piano, spanning measures 87 to 98. The score is written for both hands on a grand staff. Motive **aa** is identified in the first system, measures 87-90, as a melodic line in the right hand with a staccato articulation. Motive **bb** is identified in the second system, measures 91-94, as a melodic line in the right hand, marked *non legato*. Motive **cc** is identified in the third system, measures 95-98, as a melodic line in the right hand, marked *non legato*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and articulation marks. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4.

Ex. 8: Mm. 164-68



Ex. 9: Mm. 112-24

motive aaa

motive bbb

pp

The Third Episode: First Development Episode

There are two Development sections in the *Piano Sonata Op.12*. Each consists of two

subsections in slow and fast tempos. In the first Development Episode, the third Episode, Shostakovich begins with a drastic tempo change from the previous section, from *Adagio* to *Allegro*. This shift, in addition to the sudden shift in musical character, follows the pattern of transition established between the first and the second episodes. The abrupt change in musical content establishes the distinct sectional nature of the *Piano Sonata Op.12*.

The slow section of the third episode starts with an oscillation between semitones F-sharp and E-sharp in the left hand, which naturally creates a hypnotizing ostinato and solemnly accompanies the octave-motive **a** (Ex. 10).

Ex. 10: Mm.130-36

The musical score for Example 10, measures 130-36, is presented in two systems. The top system shows the right hand with a melodic line and the left hand with a semitone oscillation (F# and E#). The tempo changes from 'rit.' (ritardando) to 'Adagio' (marked with a half note equal to 72 beats). The right hand includes markings for 'morendo legato' and 'tenebroso'. The bottom system continues the melodic line in the right hand and the ostinato in the left hand, with 'ppp' (pianissimo) markings and pedal instructions ('con Ped.' and 'senza Ped.').

This synthesis perfectly carries out Shostakovich's expression marking of *tenebroso*. However, the insertion of motive **aa** provides a hint of sarcasm in this darkness. The slow section continues to remain in this obscurity with two more varied settings of motive **a**. In m.137, Shostakovich transposes the upper voice up a second, resulting in an interval of ninth between the two statements of motive **a**. This is a repeated method utilized throughout this piano sonata. These instances of vertical dissonance are an adaptation of the horizontal semitone cells, the foundation of this piece. Modified motive **b** and tone clusters embellish the musical content

in the rest of the slow section. With several varied designs of the thematic materials, it is obvious that Shostakovich cultivated his ability in the transformation technique to its full extent.

The slow section of the third Episode seemingly serves as a symbol of peace before the storm of the next section. As the previous slow section focuses on motive **a**, the center development of the fast section rests on modified motive **b**. The excitement of the allegro section is apparent not only because of the tempo change, but also because of the *staccato* articulation in both hands. This excitement is amplified by the modified motive **a** in octave setting in the left hand. The permutation of these two transformed motives is brought out amazingly well by Shostakovich's sublime arrangement.

In the *Allegro* section, modified motive **a**, in a bulky movement of octaves, is transformed to motive **c** and eventually builds up to a stormy climax (Ex. 11).

Ex. 11: Mm.145-54

From m.148 to m.160, Shostakovich manipulates several transformations of the modified motive **b**. Even after adding notes to the motive and altering the rhythm from triple to duple meter, the outline of motive **b** is still identifiable through the half-step motion and the dotted rhythm. The modifications of motive **b**, appearing in its inverted and compressed forms with various combinations of permutations, eventually lead to a climatic complete statement of the second thematic material—a statement containing motive **aa**, another modification of motive **b**, and motive **bb**. Shostakovich adds not only musical notes but also layering and depth of texture. The energy keeps driving forward until the outbreak of chaos in m.174. After an inversion of motive **aa**, the musical texture comes to a developmental climax wherein Shostakovich juxtaposes the first and second thematic materials (Ex. 12). Both thematic materials are presented in their complete forms. What is more interesting about this juxtaposition is the alternating and overlapping interaction of the thematic materials. Shostakovich exercises this technique on two more occasions, again making small modifications on the themes in each instance.

In m.190 (Ex. 13), the musical texture is again changed abruptly with the introduction of four new sequences. Without a clear relationship to any previous thematic materials, the basic semitone cell characterizes the traits of these sequences in a rhapsodic manner alternating with buried fourths that move underneath the melodic line. Another important element of this section is the constant alteration of the meter, which is a common compositional preference of many Modernists. In m.198, Shostakovich interrupts the music with motive **cc**, which appears only as a passing figure earlier in the second Episode. This motive now begins to gain its independent identity through Shostakovich's application of repeated notes at a thunderous dynamic as well as earthshaking tremolos and tone clusters (Ex. 14). After the overwhelming exhaustion,

Shostakovich provides a one-bar transition in m. 209, leading to the aural relief of the fourth Episode.

Ex. 12: Mm.174-82

The image displays a musical score for a piano and violin duo, spanning measures 174 to 182. The score is organized into four systems, each with a piano (p) part on the left and a violin (v) part on the right. The piano part is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The violin part is written in a key signature of one sharp (F-sharp) and a 2/4 time signature. The score includes various performance instructions such as *cresc.* (crescendo), *ff* (fortissimo), *gliss.* (glissando), and *legato*. The piano part features a series of chords and arpeggios, while the violin part includes a complex melodic line with many accidentals and a final glissando. The score is marked with measure numbers 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, and 182. The piano part has a '3' marking under measure 175, and the violin part has a '5' marking under measure 175. The score is written on a grand staff with a dashed line separating the piano and violin parts.

Ex. 13: Mm.190-97

8 *cresc.* 8 *Poco meno mosso* ($\text{♩} = 144$)

The musical score is written for piano and right hand. It consists of three systems of music. The first system begins with a measure marked '8' and a 'cresc.' (crescendo) marking. The tempo is indicated as 'Poco meno mosso' with a quarter note equal to 144 beats. The second system includes a first ending bracket labeled 'A' and a 'V' marking. The third system includes a second ending bracket labeled 'B' and a 'V' marking. Asterisks are placed at the end of the second and third systems.

Ex. 14: Mm.198-209

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano, spanning measures 198 to 209. The first system begins with a *fff* (fortissimo) dynamic and a *tremolo* marking, featuring rapid sixteenth-note passages in the right hand and sustained chords in the left. The second system continues with similar textures, including triplets and accents. The third system introduces a tempo change to *Adagio* (marked with a half note equal to 176 beats) and a *ppp* (pianissimo) dynamic, with the instruction *tenebroso* (dark). The notation includes various fingerings, accents, and dynamic markings throughout.

The Fourth Episode: Second Development Episode

As in the previous Episode, the second Development Episode divides into slow and fast sections. Unlike the tense and definite character in the slow section of the first Development Episode, this *Lento* section has a reflective and uncertain quality, created mainly by the three-layer polyphony in an aimless progression. Shostakovich indicated this section with a curious description of *dolce ma marcato* (Ex. 15).

Ex. 15: Mm.210-15

The image displays a musical score for piano, consisting of three systems of staves. Each system includes a treble staff and a bass staff, with a grand staff bracket on the left. The tempo is marked 'Lento (♩ = 92)' at the top left. The first system has a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic marking in both staves. The middle system includes the instruction 'dolce ma marcato' above the bass staff. The score features various musical notations including eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and rests. There are also markings such as '8-' and 'Red.' below the bass staff in each system, and asterisks (*) indicating specific measures. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

The main melody is in the middle voice, which does not actually form any recognizable organization of notes. However, the first two notes, which repeat in mm.219-21, catch our attention with their calling quality. The movement of the subsequent notes deviates arbitrarily from the semitone principle. In the upper voice, the grace note figure—an open arpeggiating formation—generates a refreshing sonority. In m.214, motive **aa**, possessing the same calling quality as the first two notes in the middle voice that began this section, nonchalantly adorns the atmosphere of the music. The lower voice is in a series of ascending arpeggios with the

beginning notes alternating between D, E, D-flat and E-flat. It is again a transformation, a manipulation using the concept of the semitone cell.

The overall atmosphere is stress-free and mysterious. The acoustic outcome of these three independent polyphonic lines is refreshing and ethereal. It is not until motive **a**, recurs in the upper voice in m.229, that one finally recognizes a path through the mist. The three-layer texture starts to dissolve gradually until the end of this section. In m.233, Shostakovich adopts the fugal writing technique of augmentation and juxtaposes the augmented motive **a** to the original version of motive **a**. The slow section ends with a contrast alternating between modified motive **cc** and tone clusters.

Shostakovich begins the *Allegro* section of the second Development Episode with a mysterious quality similar to that of the previous section but with a drastically altered intensity. The driving sixteenth notes and the muffled motive **aaa** in a fairly low register engender a mysterious and yet exciting sensation (Ex. 16). The incessant running figure is an effective transformation of motive **c**. It lasts for a total twenty-seven bars and intensifies by an accelerating rhythm to the climax. The presence of the buried motive **aaa** is hardly intelligible because of the register it rests in. Shostakovich's novel manipulation of the thematic material once again stimulates our ears to a new possibility of acoustic manipulation. He is certainly highly experimental in using this setting.

Ex. 16: Mm.246-52

The image displays a musical score for measures 246 through 52. The score is written for piano (left hand) and violin (right hand). The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a metronome marking of 176. The dynamics are marked 'pp' (pianissimo). The violin part is marked 'legato'. The piano part features complex fingerings and a sequence of modified motive 'b'. The violin part includes a sequence of fingerings: 1 4 1 4 1 2 3 4 1 5 4 3. The piano part includes a sequence of fingerings: 4 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 5 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 5 4 3 2. The piano part also includes a sequence of fingerings: 1 2 1 2 5 2 5 2 5 4 2 3 4 1 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 3 2 4 1 4 1 3 4 5 1. The violin part includes a sequence of fingerings: 3 2 1 2 5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 1 5 4 1 2 3 1 2 3. The piano part includes a sequence of fingerings: 8. The violin part includes a sequence of fingerings: 8. The piano part includes a sequence of fingerings: 8. The violin part includes a sequence of fingerings: 8.

In mm.263-73, the sequence of modified motive **b** then takes precedence in the musical and emotional build-up toward the Recapitulation (Ex. 17). Schoenberg's term "emancipation of dissonance" is the best summation of the phenomenon in the fast section of the fourth Episode.³⁴

³⁴ Arnold Schoenberg, *Structural Functions of Harmony* (New York: Norton & Company Inc, 1954), 193.

Ex. 17: Mm.262-71

The image displays a musical score for piano, consisting of four systems of staves. The notation is complex, featuring many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes, suggesting a fast tempo. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first system includes the marking *p cresc.* and a fermata over a measure. The second system has a fermata over a measure. The third system has a fermata over a measure. The fourth system has a fermata over a measure. The score is written for piano, with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) for each system.

The Fifth Episode: Recapitulation

In the Recapitulation, Shostakovich continually adopted the skill of permutation and combination in handling thematic materials to the extreme. The fifth Episode is the climatic episode for this approach. First, he recapitulated the first thematic material in its original meter with a similar transformation technique to that of m.38, except it is in octaves in m.274 (Ex.18). This thematic recapitulation rather than tonal recapitulation further reflects the use of thematic

material to establish the structure of the sonata form of the *Piano Sonata Op.12*. The entrance of the second thematic material in m.278 overlaps with the continuing first thematic material. This stretto is a technique borrowed from fugal writing. Shostakovich repeated this approach again by intertwining both thematic materials in mm.282-84. In m.282, the transformation technique remains consistent, but the rhythmic pulse alters from triple to duple, which creates both tension and massive sound. In order to avoid pianistic chaos, Shostakovich carefully prescribes a slower tempo marking in m.282 (Ex.19). With thick texture in the right hand and bulky octave leaps in the left hand, it is one of the most difficult technical settings for pianists. This awkward and unsettled passage leads to the peak of the final Episode. In mm.285-286, Shostakovich utilizes the combination of tone clusters and offbeat accents to create a screaming outburst before the conclusion. The final ending is paced through a series of triplets. Shostakovich first brings the music to the utmost tension of a tritone, C to F-sharp. He then ends the piece with the over-pronounced C-sharp leading and resolving to C in the right hand and an imperceptible traditional resolution from F-G-C in the left hand (Ex. 20). These detailed designs again demonstrate the influence of both Modernism and the European tradition in Shostakovich's *Piano Sonata Op.12*.

Ex. 18: Mm.274-80

S--

Meno mosso (♩ = 138)

ff

S--

A

S--

A

Ex. 19: Mm.281-286

Moderato ($\text{♩} = 116$)

più ff

The musical score is written for piano and bass. It consists of four systems of staves. The first system includes the instruction "più ff". The second and third systems have a dashed line with an "s" above the first staff of each system. The fourth system ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Ex. 20: Mm.287-288

Allegro (♩ = 104)

p *f* *sf*

CHAPTER V

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *PIANO SONATA OP.12*

The significance of the *Piano Sonata Op.12* lies in Shostakovich's exploration of the metamorphosis of the sonata genre and Liszt's idea of thematic transformation with a Russian modernist approach. The intricate design of the *Piano Sonata Op.12* demonstrates Shostakovich's high intellect and creativity as a composer. His meticulous calculation of compositional techniques is also the critical factor that resulted in disfavor from the Soviet government. A criticism from the end of 1950s mentioned, "The music is dry, darkly written, built on sharp dissonance and on automatic rhythm. This is rather a mathematical scheme, peeled construction, than an emotionally live music. In style it approaches a more fashionable movement of the time in the Western art—constructionism."³⁵ The battle over formalism with the Soviet government is well known, especially with regard to Shostakovich's music. However, this does not prevent us from appreciating the splendor of the *Piano Sonata Op.12*. Many critics enunciate positive views of Shostakovich's artistic endeavor. Julian Vhainkop comments that Shostakovich's *Piano Sonata Op.12* is a composition significant in all respects. He also notes the formation of Shostakovich's artistic individuality in this Sonata: "The young composer is definitely breaking with the academic traditions and steps onto a new independent route, brightened by the reflections of the influences of Prokofiev and, in part, leaders of the musical movements in modern Germany."³⁶

Not only does this *Sonata* represent a mélange of Western Europe and Russian Modernism, it also reveals Shostakovich's initial compositional style before politics becomes involved in his music. One senses a great deal of passion through a diverse strategy of texture, a

³⁵ Dmitri Shostakovich, *Sonata No.1 for Piano*, Foreword of Russian version by Manashir Iakubov, trans. Aleksandr Spiridonov (Moscow: DSCH Publishers, 1998), 5.

³⁶ Ibid., 5.

constant shift of rhythm, as well as the ongoing restlessness of the semitone cell. Another critic,

V.Y. Shebalin, provides an observation on this style: “Some dryness of melody, harmonic rigidity and indeterminacy of form are overcome by the variety of dynamics and by the youthful ardor, which finds its expression in the contrasting changes of movements and in the wild runs of the fast parts of the sonata.”³⁷ Vhainkop also acknowledges Shostakovich’s creativity. “In a frenzied dynamical movement of the sonata, spattering with the power of life and artistic energy, the most interesting details are drowned. . . . This does not prevent one from recognizing the sonata by Shostakovich a significant event. . . .”³⁸

³⁷ Ibid., 5.

³⁸ Ibid., 5.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

There is no artist without precursors. Shostakovich incorporates the German tradition, Russian Modernism, and Liszt's thematic transformation in the *Piano Sonata Op.12* with his brand of experimental technique. The multifaceted nature of this sonata separates it from Shostakovich's later works. In his output, *Op.12* is the only major piano work with such lengthy complexity and depth. One also perceives Shostakovich's radical, unpretentious, as well as uninhibited artistic energy in the *Piano Sonata Op.12*, which contrasts with the subtleness and simplicity in his later piano works, such as the *Twenty-four Preludes*, *Twenty-four Preludes and Fugues* and his *Second Piano Sonata*. Had the Russian government not dictated Shostakovich's works, his music would have likely gone on a revolutionary path, following the example of the *Piano Sonata Op.12*. In 1974, Aleksandr Alekseev (1913-) remarked that the sonata is "a more artistic experiment in reinterpretation of the genre . . . during the second half of the 1920's."³⁹ In every aspect, Shostakovich's *Piano Sonata Op.12* not only continues the metamorphosis of the sonata genre, but it also sets up an inspiring model of the genre for the future composers.

³⁹ Ibid., 5.

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